

CHEERS WAR BLIND BY SHOWING WAY TO MAKE LIVING

Miss Holt, "Lighthouse" Founder, Writes of Victims She Saw.

Miss Winifred Holt, founder of the "Lighthouses," No. 311 East Fifty-ninth Street, which has rescued many blind people from misery by teaching them useful trades, went to France

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Second Floor



recently established a similar organization for the benefit of soldiers blinded in the war. Miss Holt's first letter telling of her experience in the war zone has just been received by Mrs. Peter Cooper Hewitt, Secretary of "The Lighthouses."

The Prefect of Lyons, Miss Holt writes, wrote to all the Prefects of the Rhone district, so that her search for the blind men in Paris. One of them, a M. Blaché, she wished to engage as a teacher, with salary. "But no," he replied. "I am blind. I cannot serve my country in the trenches. But I shall sacrifice with great joy this opportunity of service, and with no other compensation than the privilege of doing the work." His sister also volunteered.

Miss Holt writes of one of the blind soldiers:

"This man, Nicolai, is one of the most remarkable of the heroes whom it has been my privilege to meet. His story, according to the lieutenant commanding his company in the absence on account of wounds of the captain, is that, during an attack on a German trench, he leaped so far ahead of his comrades that he reached the trench alone, and his comrades not coming up in sufficient numbers to support him, was left to fight alone against the Germans, of whom he killed or put hors de combat several.

"Finally, however, a hand grenade exploded and tore out one eye, and he was obliged to yield to force of numbers. Shortly afterward the French arrived in greater force and again reached the trench. Two comrades found Nicolai and bandaged him, afterward propping him up in a corner of the trench.

"The fight became fiercer and fiercer and finally Nicolai could not continue to look on any longer. He sprang up, seized a German's rifle, and threw himself into the melee. For sometime he valiantly supported his comrades, in spite of his terrible wound, when another grenade arrived and tore out his remaining eye. Nicolai lost consciousness, the French were obliged to evacuate the trench, and was left as a prisoner of the Germans. History does not record how he again came into French hands.

"Another of our recruits is now in a hospital in Marseilles. He has no eyes, no feet, and only one arm. As soon as he has false legs, a false arm and glass eyes provided and is well enough to travel, we hope to have him in our hostel.

"When we entered the building at the Marine in Marseilles, we were greatly astonished by the architecture. Apparently we were in a ship, saloon-masted and stood on either side of the spiral stairs, which gave the effect of a ship's stairway. We then met officers dressed in navy uniforms and finally, ship-like doors were thrown open and we entered a round room like a cabin. The windows were circular, decorations consisted of shells and anchors. A little man rose to meet us. This great little man hardly five feet tall, was white from his small shoes to the crown of his distinguished head. His face was aristocratic, and a small white beard made it intensely French.

"We called on Capt. de Beauvoir's especial blind protege. There was very little left of him, except his courage. His legs had been amputated and his right arm. His huge

hand still clutched his rifle. He was blind, but the light of intelligence and the knowledge of a horizon had not come to him until I slipped the unfailing domino beneath his finger, and for the first time he realized that he could find light through touch.

"It was a wonderful thing to see the revivifying of this man through the simple toy. "Male east is still," he said. "We then took a checkered alphabet onto a board, so that he could read with his left hand. The miracle continued, and before we left him he was eager to come to Paris and learn how to be blind. He actually laughed aloud with the idea of his being able to be a wage-earner and to marry the little girl who was his fiancee and go back to work in their home town. I stipulated that he should have stumps and a hook and glass eyes. It took more than my courage and my technique to look at him in his fearful plight.

"At Toulon we came to the lowest circle of hell, where the poor, damned spirit souls wait, unaccomplishing, without hope, without courage. We climbed a hill to the Hospital de St. Anne. The sun beat mercilessly on the clay ground, which was only relieved by a few stunted palms. Four blind recruits were brought out to us, each holding his rifle. I gave you a description in detail of what we were forced to look at. Enough that some had no faces and one had no hands. Still from this group, five in all, which we found there, there was one brave man who had been a chemist, whom we asked to come to Paris. He cannot sleep yet, and there is not very much left but his desire to work his way out from darkness to light.

"Since my return here we have had several new blind people. One is a motor, who was blinded and was trying to kill himself by starvation.

"Alas! we are still without our buildings. The 'Phare' at Lyons and at Marseilles will, I believe, soon

be established. Those with the Phare de Bordeaux and the Phare de France, which we will have in Paris, should cover the ground when we establish a 'Phare du Nord.' Where this should be I have not yet made up my mind. Awaiting our buildings, we are making in the meantime, and having our classes here regularly.

He was blind, and he was carried like a child. He smiled often at the little women who remained faithful to him and still proposed to marry him, but the light of intelligence and the knowledge of a horizon had not come to him until I slipped the unfailing domino beneath his finger, and for the first time he realized that he could find light through touch.

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